

Message Text

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SUBJ: EMBASSY CLOSED-AREA ACCESS ON CONSULAR BUSINESS

REFS: MOSCOW 1790, STATE 019640, STATE 028278

1. MFA PROTOCOL (LOPUSHINSKIY) INFORMED EMBASSY FEBRUARY 9 THAT REQUESTED CLOSED-AREA EXCEPTION FOR ACCESS TO MIASS VIA CHELYABINSK BY CONSULAR OFFICERS ON CONSULAR BUSINESS (STATE 019640) COULD NOT BE GRANTED "AT THE PRESENT TIME." FURTHERMORE, EMBASSY WAS INSTRUCTED THAT FUTURE REQUESTS FOR CONSULAR TRAVEL TO CLOSED AREAS MUST FIRST BE COORDINATED WITH MFA CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION BEFORE PROTOCOL CAN ACT UPON THEM. COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THIS REQUIREMENT IS BEING INTRODUCED TO FACILITATE CHECK BY MFA CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION ON WHETHER POTENTIAL GAIN TO SOVIET SIDE WOULD IN FACT BE ADVANCED BY A PROPOSED CONSULAR TRIP. MIASS TURNDOWN APPEARS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT CLOSED AREA EXCEPTIONS FOR CONSULAR BUSINESS WILL NOT BE GRANTED UNLESS IT IS CLEARLY IN SOVIET INTEREST, AS IN CASE OF RECENT EXCEPTION GRANTED FOR CONSULAR TRIP TO LITHUANIAN VILLAGE OF ANIKSHCHYAY, WHERE HARD CURRENCY GAIN WAS AT STAKE AS DESCRIBED IN MOSCOW 1331. END COMMENT

2. EMBOFF OBSERVED THAT SUCH A REQUIREMENT WAS A MAJOR PROCEDURAL CHANGE AND COULD HAVE A DIRECT BEARING ON HOW SOVIET CONSULAR TRAVEL TO CLOSED-AREAS IN THE U.S. IS HANDLED. IT WAS FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT SOVIET REQUESTS FOR CLOSED-ARE TRAVEL IN THE U.S. ON BOTH CONSULAR AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OTHER BUSINESS ARE ROUTINELY GRANTED WHILE THE OPPOSITE

OBTAINED FOR EMBASSY TRAVEL IN THE SOVIET UNION. WE SUGGESTED THAT THIS NEW PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENT TOGETHER WITH CONTINUED REFUSAL OF CLOSED-AREA ACCESS COULD BRING INTO QUESTION CURRENT LIBERAL U.S. PRACTICE CONCERNING SOVIET CLOSED-AREA ACCESS AND QUERIED WHETHER MFA REALLY WANTED TO START DOWN THAT ROAD. LOPUSHINSKIY DEFERRED COMMENT AND SAID HE WOULD CALL BACK AFTER CONSULTING WITH SUPERIORS.

3. LOPUSHINSKIY CALLED MID-AFTERNOON TO INFORM EMBASSY THAT NEITHER MFA PROTOCOL SECTION NOR CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION HAD ANYTHING TO ADD TO THE MORNING'S CONVERSATION. HE DID NOT COMMENT UPON OUR ASSERTIONS OF SUBSTANTIAL TRAVEL IMBALANCE-- PARTICULARLY REGARDING CLOSED AREAS. FYI EMBASSY WILL PROVIDE COMPARATIVE TRAVEL STATISTICS TO MFA VIA NON-PAPER WEEK OF FEB. 16. END FYI.

4. EMBASSY CONSULAR OFFICER MET WIT MFA CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION (BOSIKOV) FEBRUARY 13 CONCERNING NEW "COORDINATION" REQUIREMENT. BOSIKOV CAREFULLY EVADED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER FORMAL WRITTEN NOTIFICATION WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR FUTURE CONSULAR TRIPS TO CLOSED AREAS AND OPINED THAT "INFORMAL" DISCUSSION AT CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE SUFFICIENT AND "MORE CONVENIENT" THAN THE SENDING OF NOTES BACK AND FORTH. NONETHELESS, EMBASSY REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO MIASS TO VISIT AMCIT KAZAKOV WAS REFUSED ON GROUNDS SHE IS SOVIET CITIZEN AND THEREFORE CLOSED AREA PROHIBITION COULD NOT BE WAIVED. FYI - BOSIKOV EMPLOYED STANDARD ARGUMENTS FOR NOT ALLOWING EMBASSY CLOSED AREA ACCESS - LACK OF "SUITABLE" ACCOMMODATIONS, NEED FOR MFA TO ARRANGE FOR "ASSISTANCE" FOR EMBASSY VISITORS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHO OFTEN LACKED THE TIME OR CAPABILITIES FOR SUCH SUPPORT, AND GENERALLY "BACKWARD" CONDITIONS WHICH WOULD NOT ALLOW THE SOVIETS TO GUARANTEE EITHER OUR COMFORT OR SAFETY. END FYI

5. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THT THE DEPARTMENT CONSIDER, IN CONJUNCTION WITH PROPOSED MUTUAL RELAXATION OF TRAVEL CONTROLS OUTLINED MOSCOW 1790, A REORIENTATION OF DEPARTMENT POLICY ROUTINELY GRANTING SOVIETS CLOSED AREA ACCESS TO ONE ROUTINELY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISAPPROVING SUCH ACCESS, INCLUDING CONSULAR, UNLESS IT IS DETERMINED TO BE IN U.S. INTEREST OR IS PROVIDED FOR BY PRIOR AGREEMENT. IN ADDITION, WE RECOMMEND THAT IN CASES OF SOVIET REQUESTS FOR TRAVEL ON CONSULAR BUSINESS TO CLOSED AREAS, DEPARTMENT RECIPROCATATE THE MFA REQUIREMENT FOR TWO-STEP PROCEDURE AS DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPHS ONE AND FOUR ABOVE, I.E., CONSULAR "CONSULTATIONS" AT THE DEPARTMENT AND A TRAVEL NOTE. SOVIET EMBASSY SHOULD BE NOTIFIED THAT THE

CONSULTATIONS MUST SPELLOUT THE NATURE
OF CONSULAR BUSINESS, INCLUDING PRECISE PURPOSE OF THE TRIP
AND NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PERSONS TO BE VISITED.
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